

ARTISTIC HERITAGE: FROM KNOWLEDGE TO VALORISATION

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ABSTRACT:

After stressing the importance of knowledge and listing the different phases regarding the preservation and valorisation of artistic heritage, the authors have analysed the inherent problems of preserving the integrity and identity of a particular object of cultural heritage, also from a legislative point of view (from national law n. 1089 of 1939 to the recent New Code for Cultural Heritage and Environment of 2004).

1. MANUSCRIPT

1.1 Introduction

In the context of the current cultural and scientific debate, the themes of *knowledge* and *valorisation* of objects of *Cultural Heritage* are characterised by their polyhedric aspects resulting from historic, political and legislative influences that vary from country to country and which make their interpretation difficult.

In recent years in Italy, regulations in the field of Cultural Heritage have changed significantly both where the protection of such objects are concerned and in terms of the organisational and functional management of architectural and archaeological sites.

By the term *heritage* we generally refer to something which, thanks to its value, should be preserved. Thus, by the expression *Cultural Heritage* we are referring to all those man-made objects in a certain territory that provide information about the past and which, therefore, make it possible have knowledge about and trace the intellectual, moral and civil development of mankind.

A careful analysis is therefore necessary if we are to fully understand the numerous interpretations made by the wide variety of specialists of differing disciplines working in the sector. For example, in the field of archaeological sites, experts emphasize the concept of the *conservational process* which includes three important phases: knowledge, preservation and management, this latter comprising, amongst others, the problems of fruition and valorisation.

2. SURVEYS

As mentioned above, surveys are the first phase of any intervention. They make it possible to obtain a real understanding of the *object of cultural heritage* in question, also through a comparative evaluation of its various aspects (historical, architectonic, metric-geometric, typological, technological, etc.). The result is a global understanding of the object under examination and this will be fundamental in the subsequent phases of the intervention.

Due to the complex, inter-disciplinary nature of the initial survey, it will generally be carried out in a series of phases, a *cognitive process* made up of a sequence of moments and a succession of facts which have a common aim.

2.1 Historical analyses

The historical analysis is the basis for all subsequent studies and includes historical-philological elements from various sources (documentary, literary, iconographic, bibliographic, archives, etc.). The aim is to identify the various stratifications present in a specific cultural heritage site and/or object.

From the historical analysis it is possible to obtain in-depth knowledge of the *Architectonic Object* also in terms of its social context. In substance, the use of these integrated, interdisciplinary sources, including documents and images from the past, makes it possible to identify the object's genesis.

This important survey also makes it possible to discover the origins of the cultural object and to identify and assess the maintenance and transformations it has undergone over the years. However, not always does the information from documents equate with reality and so only through a direct *reading* of the object is it possible to confirm or negate the information gleaned from the historical analysis.

2.2 Technological analyses

As mentioned above, it is necessary to carry out a technological survey to study, as Alberto Sposito says, *the processes of formation and transformation of the object, analyses, measurements, comparisons and systems the materials*¹ Thus, starting from the supposition that to *Recover* is to *Know*, it is important to obtain a set of data inherent to the specific nature of the materials and to the static mechanisms present in the cultural heritage object under study. This information will become fundamental for the subsequent analysis of the architectonic structure, during which it will be

¹ Alberto SPOSITO, *Beni archeologici: Conoscenza, Conservazione, Gestione*, in *Sylloge Archeologica*, Università degli Studi di Palermo, DPCE, Palermo, 1999, p. 11.

possible to identify the causes of any degradation or pathologies of the material in question.

Knowledge of the configurative and material structure is essentially obtained through a survey during which a set of data are obtained using analytical methods based on specific procedures and techniques that depend on the type and importance of the material and on the level of precision required. The data obtained is recorded and transformed into graphs. The survey, therefore, must be carried out in accordance with specific aims and will include metric-geometric, technological and diagnostic elements.

In the first phase, a general inspection can provide the overall direction of the survey and give indications to define a valid support for the operations and phases of analysis regarding the importance of the organism. Furthermore, this preliminary survey makes it possible to choose the most suitable method to be implemented and to identify the best procedures and the tools for the work to be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the place in question.

This first contact with the object provides a direct means of understanding and evaluating the elements making up the *object* and these will subsequently be studied in greater detail. The aim, therefore of the initial inspection is to prepare an idea of the whole, examining the object in all its various aspects.

A careful survey must, therefore, provide a set of information that can be articulated and placed in a hierarchy of importance making it possible to set up a process that moves from the general to the specific and vice versa.

Through the use of specific procedures and techniques a suitable set of criteria will be established for the checking and collecting data.

To summarize, the function of the survey is not only to collect and record information, but also, and most importantly, to select, interpret and to transfer all the necessary data. In this sense it is absolutely essential that those working on the project have a profound and meticulous perceptive sensitivity to the conditions outlined above.

3. PRESERVATION

The term preservation includes all actions whose aim is to protect the cultural object throughout time. By its nature, the material tends to change fairly quickly and so conservation may also be seen as a useful means of safeguarding the cultural and material advantages that derive from the object in question. This consists primarily in preventative operations aimed at decreasing environmental damage to the object caused by chemical, physical and biological phenomena.

Italy was one of the first European nations to understand that its cultural history was a *patrimony* to be safeguarded. Indeed, the concept of "*cultural heritage* (...)" owes much to the culture of preservation developed in individual Italian states before unification and later in united Italy: the fact that our culture of preservation was and, to a certain extent, still is, the richest and most advanced in the world implies that the preservation of our cultural heritage is a high priority of the State, which sees it as property of all citizens"².

Over the years, the concept of heritage has widened. Indeed, while previously it was a term applied to single objects, today it has assumed a "new dimension: it includes not only isolated buildings of an enormous value with their surrounding

environment but also secondary buildings diffused over the whole territory"³.

Also at a legislative level, in the last century, there was an important conceptual evolution. Indeed, while law n. 1089 of 1939 was entitled "Safeguarding objects of artistic and historic interest", today the term *things* has been substituted by the more significant term *Cultural Heritage*.

The most correct definition of *cultural heritage* was given by the *Franceschini Study Commission*, set up with l. 23 April 1964, n. 310: *material testimonies to civilisation*.

Apart from this, in 1968 the Papaldo Commission drafted a law whose object was to guarantee the *safeguarding and valorisation of cultural heritage*. The establishment of these two Commissions was of fundamental importance as they served to initiate a widespread, nationwide debate which, towards the end of the 1970s, resulted in the school of thought that *cultural heritage* should be both safeguarded and used, thus appreciating both its material and immaterial qualities.

The legislative decree of 25th October 1999 n. 490 (Consolidated Act for Arts and the Environment), also highlighted the importance of preservation. Indeed, in article 21, entitled *Preservation Obligations* a set of regulations for safeguarding cultural heritage were laid down:

- "1) Objects of cultural heritage may not be demolished or modified without the authorisation of the Ministry.
- 2) Nor may they be used for activities that are incompatible with their historic or artistic character or any other activities that may put their conservation or integrity at risk.
- 3) Collections must not, for any reason, be dismantled without the authorisation subject of point 1)".

All this demonstrates very clearly that, in order to be preserved, objects of cultural heritage must be managed and safeguarded. Art. 148 of L.D. 31st March 1998, n. 112 defines this management as "the activity which aims, through the employment of human and material resources, to ensure the fruition of objects of cultural and environmental heritage, while at the same time guaranteeing their protection and valorisation". The same article defines safeguarding as "any activity that aims to understand, conserve and protect objects of cultural and environmental heritage".

Table 1 shows a summary of the evolution of Italian legislation regarding the concept of *safeguarding* from the last century to the present.

From this table we can see how, today, the concept of safeguarding has been enriched by new, more important definitions which deal not only with safeguarding and protection but which also lay down a real policy for cultural heritage, which is defined as a valuable asset that belongs to everyone and which must be protected if its historic memory is to be preserved. The responsible organisations must, as a consequence, lay down all the necessary regulations and actions to guarantee the protection of our cultural heritage and the public fruition of the same.

With this in mind L.D. n. 112 of 1998 specifies that the responsibility for managing cultural heritage lies, not only with the State (which is responsible for its safeguarding), but also with Regional, Provincial and Local Governments and mountain communities. As a consequence, these organisations must provide a series of museum services for the protection and promotion of objects of cultural heritage. The same decree defines promotion as being "any activity aimed at inspiring and supporting cultural activities".

² Salvatore SETTIS, *Italia S.p.A. l'assalto al patrimonio culturale*, Einaudi, Torino, 2002, p. 5.

³ Alberto SPOSITO, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12

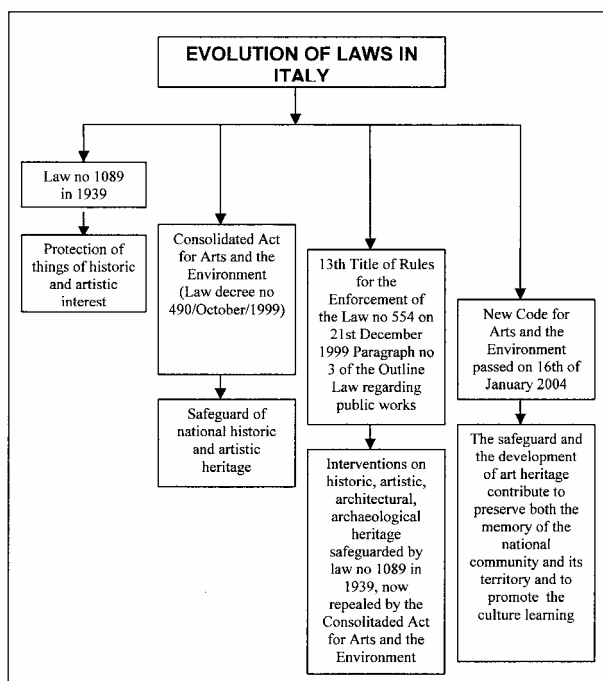


Table 1⁴

In more detail, it may help to highlight that “protection regards the maintenance and restoration of the integrity of individual pieces and / or the whole, while promotion concerns the valorisation of the object, employing the most suitable methods to make public fruition of it possible”⁵.

4. VALORISATION

As we have already seen, *objects of cultural heritage* first need to be studied, then preserved and finally valorised. This is because our cultural heritage is the depository of values that must be available to the community. Valorisation has a complex meaning, as we are not just dealing with the simple activity of safeguarding and conserving an object, but also with possibility of obtaining cultural and economic benefits from it.

Valorisation consists, therefore, in making an object that has been received, interpreted, and safeguarded available for everyone – culture for the public. However, at the same time it is a source of economic development for the territory in which it is located. Objects of cultural patrimony have a significant social and economic value which may vary depending on the attention it is given by society.

In conformity with art. 148 of L.D. 112/98, valorisation is also defined as “any activity that aims to improve the

⁴ Fulvio LANZARONE, Ernesto DI NATALE, “*Problems of preservation and fruition in archaeological sites*” Atti, al International Conference on VULNERABILITY OF 02TH CENTURY CULTURAL HERITAGE TO HEZARDS AND PREVENTION MEASURES, promossa da CICOP Federation, UNESCO, Archeological Institute of Aegean Studies, Municipality of Kos, Aegean University; Kos 3-4-5 October 2005. Pubblicazione: Cooperativa di Costruzioni, Modena, Italy, 2006 p. 324.

⁵ Fulvio LANZARONE, «La Gestione dei Beni Culturali. La Fruibilità dei Contesti Antichi», Atti del Convegno: Arte e Diversabilità 5-6 dicembre 2006, Sala Conferenze Provincia Regionale di Palermo (in c. di s.).

knowledge and conservation of cultural and environmental heritage and which will increase its fruition”. This last aspect is inextricably linked to the problem of valorisation, considered as “the moment of social truth when the valorisation project allows, enables or simplifies the transmission of the historic value of the object to the general public”⁶.

“Fruition also offers some important points for consideration (table 2). Indeed, while fruition may be a moment of pleasure, cultural enrichment, etc. it can also present numerous problems of a different nature linked both to the necessity guaranteeing that it is open to all (including persons of reduced mobility - art. 2 of M.D. n. 236 of 1989), and to the fact that the objects in question are subject to degradation over time. This latter phenomenon has numerous, often inter-connected, causes: mankind’s disregard and/or pollution, humidity, dust and many other alterations produced by visitors, not to mention vandalism or theft. These considerations demonstrate that through its “fruition” of the object in question, the public may cause damage.

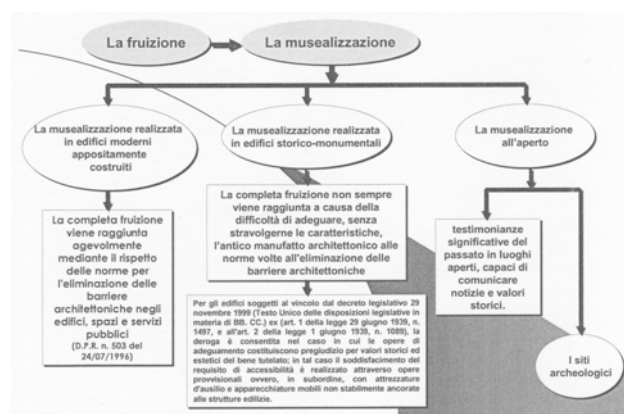


Table 2⁷

5. CONCLUSIONS

If we focus our attention on archaeological sites, it seems evident that the problems of conservation have their origins at the moment in which the object is opened to the public. Implicitly, these problems also presuppose the safeguarding the territory, as this is the depository of testimonies of the past. All this means that cultural resources need to be identified if they are to be used but, at the same time, that they should be safeguarded if they are to be used by future generations. The aim of safeguarding must, therefore, be concerned with the integrity of the *object*, protecting it from possible destruction both from natural causes (changes in temperature, climate, weeds, etc.) as well as anthropic ones brought about by the continuous flow of visitors.

Both fixed and moveable objects in archaeological sites must therefore, not only be safeguarded but also preserved and *used* as tools of generalised knowledge and culture. For this to happen, as far as the moveable objects are concerned, it is often necessary to create suitable structures in archaeological sites for

⁶ Giuseppe DE GIOVANNI, Valorizzazione e fruizione dell’architettura ritrovata, in Morgantina e Solunto-analisi e problemi conservativi, Palermo 2001, p. 109.

⁷ Fulvio LANZARONE, «La Gestione dei Beni Culturali. La Fruibilità dei Contesti Antichi», Atti del Convegno: Arte e Diversabilità 5-6 dicembre 2006, Sala Conferenze Provincia Regionale di Palermo (in c. di s.).

their conservation. However, at the same time their fruition should be guaranteed as this has a double value: simple knowledge and didactic-cultural relevance.

“These structures may just be small antiquariums or, in archaeological sites of greater public interest, real museums with more complex communicative mechanisms. The latter however, must, in conformity with Italian laws in force (D.P.R. n. 503 of 1996), guarantee the elimination of architectonic barriers inside the buildings, in external spaces and in the public services, thus making them useable by everyone.

Problems that were once ignored are, today, a source of debate and are attracting evermore interest thanks to greater public awareness.”⁸.

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⁸ Fulvio LANZARONE, *Ibidem*